

March 12, 2021

Dear Chairman Westerfield and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

We, the undersigned organizations, support HB 497 to promote a successful and healthy reentry for Kentuckians returning to communities after incarceration. Ninety-five percent of the people incarcerated in the United States eventually return to their communities. Kentuckians will benefit from having the Department of Corrections issue certificates of employability and the documentation needed for valid state-issued photo identification upon their release from incarceration.

Kentucky's high recidivism rate is caused by the lack of opportunities for returning citizens and lack of reentry supports. An estimated 60% to 75% of people who were formerly incarcerated cannot find stable employment up to a year after release. Involvement in the criminal legal system can negatively impact employment opportunities; for example, having a record reduces the likelihood of a job callback by 60% for Black applicants and 30% for white applicants.

Understanding the major barriers to successful reentry – housing, employment, and education – points to solutions. Providing a certificate of employability will increase returning citizens' opportunities for economic security and access to productive pathways. Having a photo ID is necessary for employment, substance use treatment, housing and more.

Recognizing the public does not have the opportunity to witness the rehabilitative steps of incarcerated individuals, HB 497 will allow potential employers, landlords and admissions boards to consider the productive steps taken by returning citizens.

We call on our legislators to pass HB 497, providing returning citizens, their families, and our communities a smoother pathway forward from incarceration.

Respectfully,





MID-STATES



Metro United Way



Kentucky Council of Churches





Planned Parenthood Advocates of Indiana and Kentucky

